

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE BROWN COUNTY**  
**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Pursuant to Section 19.84 Wis. Stats., a regular meeting of the **Brown County Public Safety Committee** was held on Wednesday, July 1, 2015 at the Brown County Sheriff's Office, 2684 Development Drive, Green Bay, WI

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**Present:** Chair Buckley, Supervisor La Violette, Supervisor Clancy, Supervisor Zima  
**Excused:** Supervisor Nicholson  
**Also Present:** Cullen Peltier, Sheriff Gossage, Jeff Jansen, Kalynn Podoski, Dave Lasee, Larry Malcomson, Todd Delain, John Vander Leest, Neil Basten, other interested parties

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**I. Call meeting to order.**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Patrick Buckley at 11:00 am.

**II. Approve/Modify Agenda.**

The agenda was amended to strike Item 11 as it had been approved by the Public Safety Committee and the County Board in June.

**Motion made by Supervisor La Violette, seconded by Supervisor Clancy to approve as amended. Vote taken.**  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**III. Approve/Modify Minutes of June 3, 2015.**

**Motion made by Supervisor Clancy, seconded by Supervisor La Violette to approve. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**Comments from the Public.**

Mary Kelly addressed the Committee on behalf of Joshua, and in particular the task force on mental health issues. Joshua is asking for increased medical staff at the Jail. They would like to see 24/7 medical staff along with psychiatric staff at least two days per week. Kelly felt that increased medical and psychiatric staff would increase the safety and well-being of both inmates and Jail staff. She would like to see money added to the 2016 budget for this.

**1. Review minutes of:**

- a. Fire Investigation Task Force Board of Directors (March 19, 2015).

**Motion made by Supervisor La Violette, seconded by Supervisor Clancy to receive and place on file. Vote taken.**  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**Reasons for Turnover Report**

**2. Public Safety Committee – Month of April, 2015.**

**Motion made by Supervisor La Violette, seconded by Supervisor Clancy to receive and place on file. Vote taken.**  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**3. Circuit Courts, Commissioners, Probate - Budget Status Financial Report for May, 2015.**

**Motion made by Supervisor Clancy, seconded by Supervisor La Violette to receive and place on file. Vote taken.**  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**4. Emergency Management – Budget Status Financial Report for May, 2015.**

Cullen Peltier noted that the budget looks good at this point and Emergency Management has realized some savings due to open positions.

**Motion made by Supervisor La Violette, seconded by Supervisor Clancy to receive and place on file. Vote taken.**  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**5. Public Safety Communications - Budget Status Financial Report for May, 2015.**

Cullen Peltier reported that there is nothing of significance to note in the budget at this time.

**Motion made by Supervisor Clancy, seconded by Supervisor La Violette to receive and place on file. Vote taken.**  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**Medical Examiner**

**6. Budget Status Financial Report for May, 2015.**

Interim Medical Examiner Jeff Jansen reported that the Medical Examiner's office is currently at 37% of their budget. There is a possibility that they will be over budget by mid-year due to more autopsies being requested by law enforcement and the District Attorney's office. Jansen felt the Supervisors appeared to be on board with this and did not indicate that being a little over budget would be a large concern. He continued that one of the Door County deputies resigned effective on July 1, 2015 and this will result in more empty shifts which will be backfilled by Brown County deputies.

**Motion made by Supervisor La Violette, seconded by Supervisor Clancy to receive and place on file. Vote taken.**  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**7. Activity Spreadsheet.**

Jansen indicated that last month was busy and he expects to be busy in July as well as numbers typically pick up in summer.

*Supervisor Zima arrived at 11:07 am.*

The Medical Examiner's office is currently at 97 investigations for the year. Jansen noted that there were two investigations last month, including the homicide at UWGB. He also stated that he will be reporting the number of amended death certificates to the Committee in the future as well.

**Motion made by Supervisor La Violette, seconded by Supervisor Zima to receive and place on file. Vote taken.**  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**Clerk of Courts**

**8. Budget Status Financial Report for May, 2015.**

Clerk of Courts John Vander Leest reported that budget numbers look good through May. Revenues are up by approximately \$23,000 while expenses are down by about \$17,000. He reported that there are also several vacancies in the Clerk of Courts' office and he will be looking at options to produce additional savings from these vacancies. Vander Leest also reported that long-term employee Donna Martzahl has filled the Chief Deputy position.

**Motion made by Supervisor La Violette, seconded by Supervisor Clancy to receive and place on file. Vote taken.**  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**9. Standing Item per motion at April meeting– Request for representation from the Clerk of Courts and Courts to attend each meeting through the end of 2015 to provide monthly updates including various reports as requested**

**by this Committee. May Motion: To refer to the Clerk of Courts office to meet with Corporation Counsel and come back with a recommendation as to at what point GAL bills should be converted to a civil judgment; June Motion: Hold for one month.**

John Vander Leest reported that he had met with Corporation Counsel Juliana Ruenzel concerning at what point unpaid GAL bills should be converted to a civil judgment, but they have not come to an agreement on this yet. Currently unpaid GAL bills are converted to civil judgments after 180 days. Vander Leest felt that it would be more beneficial to change this to 270 days as that would provide the Clerk of Courts more time to bring parties into court to attempt collection before a judgment is entered. Currently parties are called into court if they are not paying within about 30 or 60 days to explain why they are not paying, but extending the number of days before a civil judgment is entered would allow the parties to be called back in. Vander Leest noted that once a judgement is entered, parties can still be called to Court, however, a notice of a court proceeding would need to be professionally served by a process server which increases costs. The service fees are added onto the judgment, but if the judgment is not being paid, this is of little use.

Vander Leest continued that he has had conversations with other Clerk of Courts around the area to find out how they handle these matters and most of them seem to feel that the 180 day time frame is too short. Supervisor Zima asked why Corporation Counsel did not wish to extend the time frame out. Financial Operations Manager Neil Basten felt it stemmed from the office dynamics in Corporation Counsel and their current workload. Vander Leest stated he would not be opposed to not having a civil judgment occur for 360 days as he feels a civil judgment should be used as a last resort. This would allow a longer period of time to bring parties back to court multiple times to try to get payment arrangements made. Once a civil judgment is entered, a tax intercept can be done, but Vander Leest noted that often there are a number of other parties in front of the County who also file tax intercepts so filing the intercept does not guarantee payment. Vander Leest felt the greatest chance to collect on these bills comes within the first 6 – 12 month period.

Chair Buckley asked why Corporation Counsel wanted to keep the time frame at 180 days and it was indicated that Ruenzel had a preference for the tax intercept process. Basten indicated that they run a list every week during tax season so Brown County can be first in line with an intercept to collect as there is a lot of competition with other counties.

Zima asked where the 180 day timeframe originated and Basten responded that he believed it was developed through former Corporation Counsel John Luetscher a number of years ago. Vander Leest indicated he had spoken to some of the judges with regard to this and was advised that it is not a court rule but rather a County decision. He felt that extending the time frame before a civil judgment is entered would allow the parties to be brought into court several times before the civil judgment was entered and that it was easiest to collect on these before they got to the judgment stage. Buckley did not see Corporation Counsel's logic in not wanting to extend the timeframe if they are so busy.

Buckley advised Vander Leest that he would like Corporation Counsel to bring an explanation in writing to the next Public Safety Committee meeting as to why she does not want to increase the timeframe to convert the unpaid GAL bills into civil judgments. Buckley also felt it would be appropriate to have an agenda item on the next Public Safety Committee agenda for discussion and possible action regarding time frame for converting unpaid GAL bills to civil judgments.

Vander Leest continued that he would like to see payment hearings on judgments started as soon as possible; as early as August. He understands that Corporation Counsel is currently a little short staffed, but he would like to see payment hearings be held on a monthly basis.

Clancy asked if all of the past due bills are actively being worked on and Vander Leest responded that they are doing all they can.

**Motion made by Supervisor La Violette, seconded by Supervisor Clancy to receive and place on file. Vote taken.  
MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**10. Clerk of Court's Report. *June Motion: Hold for one month.***

Clerk of Courts John Vander Leest reported that he had a meeting recently with Credit Management Control, the outside collection agency being used to collect outstanding monies. Credit Management Control ran a report of outstanding accounts which was reconciled with the Clerk of Courts records to be sure that both sets of records matched. Vander Leest indicated that they will do this on a regular basis to ensure accuracy. He continued that the collection agency has a special campaign dedicated to making calls for the Clerk of Courts and they typically focus on people with higher credit scores first as those clients are the most likely to pay. Both Vander Leest and the collection agency feel this has been successful and they will continue in making contacts with debtors. Vander Leest stated that the agency has been able to set up some payment plans and garnishments and some accounts have also been paid in full. He noted that the collection agency retains 15% of what is collected as their fee.

Zima felt that some people may not even know they are supposed to be paying the bills and asked if the County provides the parties with stern letters outlining their responsibilities and what the consequences are for not paying the bills. Basten responded that when the attorneys present their GAL bills to the Court, they also provide a copy to the parties and the bill is then entered into the system. Once the 180 day due date hits Basten sends a reminder letter to the responsible party which includes advising them of what steps will be taken if the bill is not paid. Zima felt it needed to be a good strong letter to get the point across and get into the parties' heads. Vander Leest noted that in family law cases, the parties are also paying their own private attorneys and may be facing additional financial hardships which keep them from making payments on the GAL bills. He also noted that some judges set up payment plans at the end of hearings. Warrants are not an option in GAL cases as they are in criminal cases. Vander Leest is looking to get samples of the letters used by other counties to collect GAL bills to see if there is any good information that should be added to Brown County's letter.

Buckley asked if interest was charged on outstanding balances and Basten responded that they charge 1% per month and it is often used as a negotiating tool. Buckley felt that a higher interest rate may give additional incentive for people to get their bills paid.

Vander Leest continued that they try to bring parties with the higher credit ratings back into court or those who own homes or other property as a civil judgment become a lien on real property. He also said that he discussed the higher dollar cases with County Executive Troy Streckenbach and Director of Administration Chad Weininger. They sometimes use Facebook as a tool in collections as often you can find out where someone is employed or see what their spending habits are. When they see a party who is going on a trip or buying a new vehicle, they figure that they have a greater ability to pay their court bills than some of the other parties who are incarcerated or do not have jobs. Extending the timeframe for converting an unpaid bill to a civil judgment as discussed above would allow more time to use some of these methods to find out who may be able to pay versus those that are not able to make payments.

Clancy asked Basten if these unpaid bills show up on credit reports. Basten responded that he contacted CCAP last month to ask about this and was advised that the three largest credit reporting agencies need to subscribe to a service to have these unpaid bills added to a credit report and they do not currently do that. Title agencies often subscribe to the service though so that they can find liens that need to be paid in the home or property buying process. Vander Leest stated that they used to receive calls from people looking to clean up judgments as they were buying or selling property, but that does not happen very frequently anymore. Zima felt that it would be effective to publish judgments on Facebook, similar to the way the Sheriff's Department posts outstanding warrants. Sheriff Gossage added that the press does occasionally access Facebook and sometimes things are put in the media, but it is typically not a priority for the press to do so. Gossage also noted that the Sheriff's Department or Clerk of Courts can feed the press information with regard to warrants or judgments, but there is no guarantee the information will be printed.

Vander Leest continued that he had recently met with Internal Auditor Dan Process to discuss collection procedures. Currently parties are sent a reminder notice 30 – 60 days before the due date and are given three options for payment. The hope is that the bills are paid in full or payment plans are set up. Vander Leest noted that in criminal cases community service used to be an option for payment, but they no longer do this on a regular basis.

Supervisor La Violette asked how much money is outstanding at the current time. Basten did not have an updated list with him, but recalled that it was about \$16 million dollars which includes restitution payments, traffic tickets, attorney fees and GAL fees. La Violette also asked what percent of that outstanding amount Basten felt was collectible and although Basten did not have a firm figure, he noted that the amount that is collected continues to rise. Vander Leest added that the hearings on the GAL bills should add another \$5,000 - \$10,000 in revenue and he thought the Clerk of Courts office would hopefully bring in \$50,000 - \$60,000 per year. He noted that some people forget about their outstanding bills and then when they are brought back into court they tend to take things more seriously. La Violette thanked Vander Leest and Basten for the work they are doing in trying to get these bills paid.

Zima inquired as to what portion of the outstanding debt pertained to GAL bills and Vander Leest replied that it was at least \$2 million dollars and possibly higher and noted that the Clerk of Courts office is in charge of collecting all debts of the court system. Zima felt that it may be appropriate to have staff dedicated solely to the collection of debts. Vander Leest responded that the staff in place at this time does a good job and Basten added that current staff is able to do everything possible up to the point of bringing parties back into court on payment hearings.

Zima asked if judges were cooperating with the collection efforts and Vander Leest stated that it is Corporation Counsel's decision to bring a party back into court after a civil judgment is entered and he reiterated that the parties need to be personally served which increases costs. Zima felt that a policy of support from Corporation Counsel may be appropriate and Vander Leest agreed. He felt it was important for Corporation Counsel and the Clerk of Courts to have a process going forward on new GAL bills to get them into court on a regular basis as the money that is being collected is County money and the County Board and Corporation Counsel should be involved in decisions as to how to handle this.

La Violette would like to see a simple monthly report as to how much is collected on these bills. Vander Leest and Basten indicated that they could present this information.

Buckley indicated that he would like to see Vander Leest discuss this further with Corporation Counsel and have a policy drafted that is brought back at the next meeting.

**Motion made by Supervisor Zima to send affirmation to Corporation Counsel that the Public Safety Committee supports collection of past due GAL bills and develop a process for collection of new GAL bills that includes asking parties to appear in court within 30 – 60 days. No second; no vote.**

Vander Leest also noted that there have been efforts made to have the judges wrap up cases quickly to avoid increased GAL costs, although there are no set rules with regard to this. The judges do have the ability to ask for additional deposits from parties, but in cases where there are waivers or additional deposits are not made, the GAL fees just continue to increase as court officials will not deny service. Zima felt there should be some sort of rule in place that GAL fees be paid up front throughout the case. Vander Leest stated that there is strong consistency among the judges that they are required to provide a GAL as provided by law.

Zima felt that the GALs are important and provide important services. He felt that this was a systemic problem and noted that there are parties in Jail that cannot pay, but there are others that can pay and choose not to and those are the people that need to be held responsible. Buckley asked if it would be feasible for the County to employ their own GALs to work under the direction of Corporation Counsel. Vander Leest responded that that would be something that would have to be decided by the judges.

Clancy recalled that a number of years ago there was discussion concerning putting up a billboard showing people who have warrants or owe the Courts money. Vander Leest noted that the *Press Gazette* has expressed interest in publishing active warrants as well as those with outstanding GAL bills. He said that other counties have done this and typically the money recovered is enough to offset the price of the ad. Vander Leest also thought that setting up a Facebook page and listing those with outstanding balances may be helpful. Zima felt that publishing a list of those that do not pay their bills was a good idea and would help get the message out that collection efforts will be made on those who do not pay. He felt that some people may not even know that they are supposed to be paying on these bills and he would like to make sure that the County is sending a stern letter to parties informing them of what their obligations and responsibilities are and what the consequences will be if the bills are not paid.

Vander Leest concluded by inviting the Committee to host a meeting at the Courthouse. He can provide a tour of the facility and the Committee would also be able to have discussions with some of the judges as well. Buckley felt this was a good idea and will work this in sometime in the fall.

**Motion made by Supervisor La Violette, seconded by Supervisor Clancy to receive and place on file. Vote taken.**  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**Sheriff**

**11. Budget Adjustment Request (15-39): Any increase in expenses with an offsetting increase in revenue.**

This item was removed from the agenda; no action taken.

**11a. Budget Status Financial Report for May, 2015.**

**Motion made by Supervisor La Violette, seconded by Supervisor Clancy to receive and place on file. Vote taken.**  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**12. Sheriff's Report.**

Sheriff Gossage indicated that he has spoken with Jail Captain Larry Malcomson regarding having more medical coverage in the Jail, specifically 24/7 coverage and he advised that he will be including that in the budget for 2016. Gossage continued that the State audits have recommended 24/7 medical coverage and this is something that Gossage looks at year after year but there never seems to be money in the budget for this. Zima responded that the County Executive does not control the purse strings of the County. Zima wished the minutes to reflect that this is something that has been restricted by the County Executive in the past. Zima continued that needs have to be examined as in the past department heads were asked where the needs were and then a budget was presented that reflected the needs so the County Board could consider the needs and how to fund them. Zima does not know why guys get the idea that to run for office they have to lower the tax rate and noted that the budget has not gone up to the levy limits in years. Zima continued that not having 24/7 medical coverage in the Jail is neglecting basic services. Buckley did not agree that services were being neglected and he noted that no matter how much is put in the budget for things, people will always want more and it is up to the County Board to decide what the best use of the money is.

Zima continued that he has never been known to be a spendthrift, and he is not asking to increase the tax rates, but he does not feel it is appropriate to neglect things that are necessary to stay within levy limits. The problem will not stop without being treated. He felt that the County Executive's main objective is to say that he has not raised the tax rate but he noted that the County has had a AAA bond rating for quite some time and further, Brown County has the lowest debt ratio of any county in the state.

La Violette stated that she would like to review figures of the cost to provide the services the Sheriff feels are needed. Malcomson felt that at least 1/3 of the people in the Jail have mental health needs.

Gossage indicated that he has discussed this with the County Executive and has also had discussions with Judge Zuidmulder regarding trying to get more of the mental health cases out of the Jail and into treatment court instead. Zima, however, questioned if mental health treatment court provided the appropriate services necessary to treat the individuals who fall under this category.

Malcomson indicated that he has spoken with the Jail's current health care provider to get an idea of what the increase would be to provide 24/7 care. He was given an estimate of \$129,000 annually for 56 hours per week of night shift coverage by an RN who would be able to adequately review medications coming into the facility and this would definitely assist in the time lapse of getting medications to those who need it in an appropriate timeframe. Clancy felt that the problem stems from the fact that things have changed in the last 10 – 15 years and the County has not kept up with the changes and has been trying to economize as well. He agreed with Zima in that he would like to see what the costs will be for the services that are needed and the County should bite the bullet to make the necessary changes so things do not continue. Clancy felt that the Public Safety Committee needs to support this.

Zima felt that the Sheriff should advise the County Board that in order to avoid having to build a new wing at the Jail certain services need to be provided and provide the Board with the cost to build a new wing as well as the cost to provide the services that are necessary to prevent the need for an additional wing. Gossage provided a rough estimate of \$32 million dollars to build an additional wing, but noted that that figure does not include the costs for staffing the wing.

Zima continued that things in the County have changed over the last number of years and there is more criminal activity going on. He felt the County needs to start to get proactive about areas that have been shortchanged in the past that could have serious consequences to the taxpayers in the future. There needs to be some type of care provided for the people who have real problems. Zima is not talking about huge increases, but increases that are sensible and may even stay within the levy numbers.

Buckley added that we cannot look to the Sheriff to be the cure all. We also need to look at the bigger picture with Human Services and the drug court. Gossage agreed and noted that he is also looking at other alternatives to incarceration.

Clancy asked if it would be possible to have an outline of what the Sheriff would like to see added to the budget in the next several months so that consideration can be made before the budget process starts. Gossage indicated that a cost benefit analysis would be somewhat difficult as there are a number of stakeholders involved in this. He encouraged members of the Public Safety Committee to attend the next Criminal Justice Coordinating Board meeting as this is where these items are typically discussed and he felt the Committee could gain valuable information and insight. Buckley noted that he would like to see someone from the Criminal Justice Coordinating Board attend the next Public Safety Committee meeting to provide an update.

**Motion made by Supervisor La Violette, seconded by Supervisor Clancy to receive and place on file. Vote taken.**  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**District Attorney** – No agenda items.

**Emergency Management** – No agenda items.

**Other**

**13. Audit of bills.**

**Motion made by Supervisor Clancy, seconded by Supervisor La Violette to pay the bills. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**14. Such other matters as authorized by law. None.**

**15. Adjourn.**

**Motion made by Supervisor La Violette, seconded by Supervisor Clancy to adjourn at 12:17 pm. Vote taken.**  
**MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

Respectfully submitted,

Therese Giannunzio  
Recording Secretary